

The CHARACTER and OFFICE
of St. Peter *explained.*

A
S E R M O N

Preached at

ROTHERHITH,

The 5th of November, 1728.

By THOMAS MOLE.

Published at the REQUEST *of the People.*



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THE CHURCH OF THE
SACRAMENT

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

ROTHESBURY

THE 10th of November, 1794.

BY THOMAS WOLF

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF THE SACRAMENT.

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TO

John Wall, Esq;

High Sheriff of Surry.

S I R,

THERE is nothing that comes under the Name of Religion, that so well merits the Averfion of every wife and good Man, as that which is taught by the Church of *Rome*; the blasphemous Pretences to Power, and the notorious Abuses made of it by that Church, are fufficient to difcover the Fraud of its Religion to all

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all but its blind and bigotted Voraries ; and though they have a Multitude of these, they have also a Multitude of others, who treat the true Christian Religion with Ridicule in private, on Account of the Absurdity of Popery, whilst they adhere to the Profession of what is falsely so called on Account of the Gain of it.

And it is not to be wondered at, that such a Multitude of Deists (as is commonly observed, and is too notorious to be denied) should be found amongst its Clergy, who make Use of their Profession to no other Purposes, than what their Religion it self was first framed to promote, *viz.* The Power and Riches of those who have the Direction of it.

Nor is there, perhaps, a more proper Cause to which to ascribe the Contempt of the Gospel, and
all

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all revealed Religion, than the Clergy's pretending to the Possession of that Authority, which is lodged in the Hands of Christ Jesus alone.

And we had probably had fewer Invectives against Christianity, and less opprobrious Language against the Clergy of all Sorts, had the Former been preserved in its primitive Purity, and the Latter confined their Pretensions to Power within the Bounds of a Christian, and becoming Modesty.

Wherefore nothing is more becoming the Ministers of the Gospel, than to detect the Fallacy of those fraudulent Methods by which the Papists endeavour to establish their Religion, and allure the World into the firm Belief of it; and when Persons of your superior Character and Station, encourage and give favourable Countenance to their Endeavours, it will most certainly encrease

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crease the Pleasure of their Undertakings, and more probably secure the desired Success of them.

That your Opportunities may be equal to your Abilities and Inclination to serve your Country, and do good to Mankind, that the Success of your Endeavours may be always answerable to the Sincerity of them; that you may long live in the Enjoyment of all the Blessings of this Life, and hereafter inherit the Blessings of a better, is the sincere Prayer of,

Sir,

Your most obliged,

Most obedient,

Humble Servant,

*Rotherkith,
Nov. 18. 1728.*

T. Mole.

M A T. xvi. 18, 19.

And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church: And the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: And whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven: And whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.

TH E S E Words contain, according to the Opinion of the Papiſts, the original Grant of Precedency, Supremacy and Infallibility, made by our Saviour to *Peter*, above the rest of the Apostles, and to the Church and Bishops of *Rome* above all other Churches and Bishops in the World: Hereupon they found their Claim of Power and Authority over all other Christians, and the strict Obligation they are all under to receive the Doctrines, and obey the Dictates of him who is Bishop in that See, whom they imagine to be the Successor of *Peter*,

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ter, the Representatives of Christ, and the very Image and Idea of God among Men. 'Tis from hence that they infer their Right of Jurisdiction over all the Earth, the Power of admitting whom they will into Heaven, and casting all Men that shall displease them, into Hell, and binding them in Chains of everlasting Darkness. This is the Fountain whence all their grand Pretences are derived, to forgive the Sins of the most scandalous Sinner, and to retain those of the most perfect Saint; who changing the Nature and Order of Things, assume an Authority to call *Evil Good, and Good Evil; Bitter Sweet, and Sweet Bitter; Darkness Light, and Light Darkness*. So that what was falsely said of the Apostles, may, with the utmost Truth, be applied unto them, that they *Jeduce the People, and turn the World upside down*.

So grossly absurd is the whole Doctrine of Popery, that it becomes a necessary Part of it, not only to dissuade us from the Use, but even deny us the Right of all private Judgment, and debar us that Freedom and Liberty of Thought, which serves as the Basis of all true Religion, and can be taken away from us only for the Service of a wicked and vile one: For to what can it be owing, that they desire to deprive us of the Exercise of our Judgment, but a Consciousness of the vile and wicked Nature of what they persuade us to embrace, and of the Impossibility of our doing it, whilst we continue in the Possession of our Understandings: And can this recommend any Religion whatsoever to us, as reasonable Creatures, that the first Step, preparatory to our receiving and embracing it, must be our renouncing and part-
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ing with that which makes us such, and what is not only dear to us, but most deservedly dear above all other Things in the World?

What Impositions may not a Man fall under? What Delusions does he not become liable to, when once he has parted with his Reason and Understanding, which alone can guard and secure him against them: And what comfortable Security can he ever have, he is in the right, when he is bereft of that by which alone he is to distinguish what is Right from what is Wrong?

It is therefore not so much owing to Wisdom as Necessity, that the Patrons of Popery require us to offer them the so costly Sacrifice of our private Judgments, they being fully assured that we can never receive the Doctrines they teach, as Heavenly and Divine, whilst we continue in Possession of our Reason and Understanding, which will ever represent them as most irrational and absurd.

Wherefore, to take off the seeming Absurdity of such a Surrender, they invest themselves with the Characters of Infallible and Supreme in all Matters of Religion, and represent themselves possessed of the whole Power and Authority of the Almighty himself, and urge upon us these Words of our blessed Saviour, wherein he pronounces *Peter*, and as they would have us believe, the succeeding Bishops in the Church of *Rome*, the Rock upon which the Christian Church is established, against which, the Artifice and Malice of Hell shall never be able to prevail; and hence infer it to be our Wisdom as well as our Duty to confide wholly in them, who have Heaven and the

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Souls of Men left so absolutely at their Disposal.

I shall at this Time therefore endeavour to explain to you the Meaning of these Words, and show that they have nothing in them favourable to the Principles of Popery.

And herein I shall observe the Order and Method in which the Words lie.

- I. Consider the Meaning of our Saviour's Address to *Peter*.
- II. What our Saviour means by the *Rock* upon which he promises to *build his Church*.
- III. The Stability, Duration and Success of his Church, which he asserts, *the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against*.
- IV. The Promise that is here made to *Peter*, of his having the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, and that *whatsoever he binds or looses on Earth shall be bound or loosed in Heaven*.
- V. I shall make some Reflections on the Whole.

- I. I shall consider our Saviour's Address to *Peter*, and I say also unto thee, that thou art *Peter*.

Our blessed Saviour had put the Question to his Apostles, *Whom say ye that I am?* This Question which was put to them all, *Peter*, out of the Forwardness of his natural Temper, takes upon him, alone, to make Answer to, and says, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God*. It is in Reply to this, that our Saviour speaks these
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Words unto him; *And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, q. d.* Since thou hast so freely told me what are thy Thoughts concerning me, in such an important Article, I will tell thee in Return, what I think of thee; verily, *I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter.* Dost thou affirm me to be the great and glorious Messiah? I do likewise tell thee, *that thou art Peter*; upon which our Saviour must have laid an Emphasis.

It cannot be thought, that in so saying he means no more, than that his Name was *Peter*, and that this was the common Appellation by which he was known; for, as he had confessed a Matter to our Saviour which was of great Consequence, *viz.* that he was the *Messiah, Son of the living God*, which was an Article of consummate Importance in the Christian Religion, it must seem trifling, and of little moment, for our Saviour, in reply to this, to say, and verily, *I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, i. e.* in answer to thy calling me the Messiah, which is the Subject and Completion of all the Types, Prophecies, Ceremonies, Sacrifices, of the Old Testament, I tell thee that thy Name is *Peter*.

Our Saviour's speaking in answer to such a Confession, and speaking it in such a Manner, and, *I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter*, shews, that he is uttering somewhat of far greater Consequence, somewhat singular and extraordinary, relating to the Person spoken to. Let us therefore consider, what it is our Saviour, in calling him *Peter* emphatically, refers to, and probably, it is to the first Meeting and Interview which *Peter* had with our Saviour, when he first became his Disciple and Follower, an Account of which we have, *John i. 41.*
seq.

seq. John being with two of his Disciples, and seeing Jesus walking, he looks to these two Disciples, and points to Jesus, and says, *Behold the Lamb of God*, who hearing this, followed after Jesus, and having overtaken him, say, *Master, where dwellest thou*; Jesus says to them, *Come and see*; upon which they went and staid with him that Day, in which, it's probable, they made many Inquiries, and had much Discourse with him, and went away satisfied of the Truth of what John had told them, that he was indeed the *Lamb of God*.

One of these two was *Andrew*, *Peter's* Brother, who, the first thing he did after he had parted with Jesus, went to seek his Brother *Peter*, who, it's probable, was one of those that waited for the *Consolation of Israel*; to him therefore *Andrew* goes, and, like one who was rejoiced himself, and knowing it would rejoice his Brother also, as falling in with his Expectations, he tells him, with a Surprise of Joy, saying, *We have found the Messiah*, i. e. behold our Expectations are fulfilled, he whom we have so often talked together of, he is come, and we have found him. At this Report, like two Persons that were overjoyed, *Andrew* and *Peter*, both immediately go to Jesus again, and as soon as they were come into his Presence, before they could speak to him, Jesus looks upon *Peter*, though he had never seen him before, and says, *Thou art Simon*: He tells him his Name, which he knew not by any Information, but by Virtue of the divine Discernment within him, and which his Exercise of, in this manner, would show him to be privy to what had passed between them, and be a Confirmation of their

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Belief. For herein our Saviour makes an Allusion, both to the Meaning of *Simon's* Name, and to the Conversation that had pass'd between the two Brothers, *q. d.* *Thou art *Simon*, Thou art what thy Name imports, a *Hearer* indeed; art thou so ready to search into the Truth of my being the Christ, upon hearing thy Brother tell it thee, as to come joyfully and inquisitively to search into it thy self? Art thou such a well inclined Person, so disposed for Truth, as thus joyfully to receive the first Dawnings of its divine Light? I cannot but take Notice to thee, how well thy Dispositions answer to the Signification of thy Name; Thou art *Simon*.

This will receive further Confirmation, if we consider the Words that follow. Thou art *Simon*, and thou shalt be called *Cephas*, or *Peter*; thou art already called *Simon*, and the Goodness of thy Nature has answer'd the Signification and Meaning of thy Name, and shown, that thou art in reality what this Name imports. Behold, I will give thee another Name, thou shalt be called *Cephas*, or *Peter*; and not only shalt thou be called so, but thou shalt as exactly answer in thy Nature to this Name as the other, and between it and thy Character there shall be a like Agreement. Our Saviour calls him *Cephas*, which is in *Syriack* what *Peter* is in *Greek*, both signifying a Rock; so that the Meaning of our Saviour is, Thou art called *Simon*, and art what thy Name imports, a true Hearer, such as I seek, who are willing to be

* *Simon* is a *Hebrew* Name, signifying a *Hearer*; and our Saviour here seems to call him by his Name, for the sake of this Allusion to the Meaning of it.

informed, and ready to embrace Opportunities of Information whenever they offer. Henceforward thou shalt be called *Peter*, with a like Affinity and Relation of thy Character to thy Name, which hereafter I will take an Opportunity further to explain unto thee.

All this happen'd upon the first Discourse Jesus had with him, upon his Brother *Andrew's* informing him he had found the Messiah, and carrying him unto him.

It was two Years after this, that this Discourse in the Context pass'd between Christ and *Peter*, where, after having asked the Sentiments that others entertain'd of him, our Saviour demands, and, *Whom think ye that I am*, *Peter* replies, The same that my Brother *Andrew* told me of thee, when I met him after he had been with thee, the same believe I thee to be now from Conviction and Experience, *The Christ, the Son of the eternal God*. To which our Saviour's Reply is to be understood after this manner, Dost thou, indeed, yet continue in that Belief, are these divine Sentiments of your Leader confirm'd in your Breast; thy Firmness and Constancy in adhering hereunto, is no other than what I foresaw and foretold thee, when I said, Thou shalt be call'd *Peter*, and this thy Boldness in adhering to this Truth, shows a like Agreement to this Name I have given thee, as thy readiness in receiving it showed unto that which thou hadst before. Verily, Thou art *Peter*; thou art a Person of Firmness and Constancy, thou art what I have assured thee thou shouldst be called; thy Constancy remains so unshaken by all the Objections and Calumnies of the *Jews*, my Enemies; the Malice of the *Pharisees*, the Ridicule
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of the *Sadducees*, the Threats of the High Priests, have not yet been able to shake thy Belief, or turn thee from the Constancy and Firmness of thy Mind, which I design'd to represent, when I told thee thou shouldst be called *Cephas* or *Peter*. *Verily, I say unto thee, Thou art Peter.*

And it seems as if our Saviour referr'd to the *Jewish* Proverb, which was, That whatever was built on a Rock was firm and secure from falling of it self, or being thrown down by any Attempts made against it. This was a common Way of speaking frequently made use of by their Rabbies and Doctors, in explaining their Law; and the People of the *Jews* being frequently used to it, would easily apprehend its Meaning, upon any Application whatever that was made of it. To this therefore our Saviour may probably be supposed to have had an Eye, when he gave that Apostle this Name, as he has in *Mat. vii. ult.* where he likens the Man that heard his Sayings, in order to do them, to one that builds his House on a Rock, which nothing whatever is able to overthrow.

II. I come to consider, What our Saviour means by the *Rock*, upon which he promises to *build* his *Church*.

This is the first Place wherein the Word *Church* occurs in the New Testament, and here it undoubtedly signifies the whole Society and Body of Christians, which Christ came into the World to institute, and which, in all succeeding Times, should by the Power of his Doctrine be brought to profess and believe in his Name;

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but what is meant by the *Rock* is not so universally agreed.

Some by the *Rock* mean not *Peter*, but the Confession of *Peter*; and so our Saviour's Meaning is, upon this Confession of thine, that Jesus is the Christ, will I build the whole Fabrick of Christianity, and this shall be the distinguishing Character of my Followers, that they believe me to be the Messiah, Son of the Living God: Many fearing they should allow too much to the Papists, would by all means avoid interpreting this *Rock* of *Peter*, lest it should afford them an Opportunity of elevating St. *Peter* into a Degree of Superiority above the rest of the Apostles; and since he had made such a Confession, as is the first fundamental Article of Christianity, they think they may fairly infer, that this Confession of *Peter's*, and not *Peter* himself, is the *Rock* mentioned by our Saviour.

But this seems unlikely to be the Meaning of our Saviour's Words, and not so well to suit the grammatical Construction of them, which would, according to this Interpretation, stand thus, Thou art a *Rock*, and upon this *Confession* will I build my *Church*, whereby the Strength of his Meaning is dropp'd, and the Beauty of his Allusion to *Simon's* Name is destroyed, and the Saying of our Saviour is made to have no force and coherence: Wherefore by *Rock* is undoubtedly meant the Apostle *Peter* himself, Thou art a *Rock*, says Jesus, and upon this *Rock* will I build my *Church*. What *Rock* can that be? What *Rock* is mentioned before, and of Consequence, what can this *Rock* refer to, but to *Peter*, who is immediately called so in the preceding

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ceding Words by our Saviour, and whose being so called, was the only Reason for his using this Expression, of *building his Church on a Rock?* And his Meaning evidently is.

The Name I have given thee signifies a *Rock*, and on this Account it was that it was given thee by me, for such as is thy Name shall be thy Work and Office: Thou hast openly confessed me to be, what in Truth I am, the Messiah, and so great is the Firmness, Constancy, and Strength of thy Mind, that immoveable as a *Rock*, thou shalt continue to confess it in the Face of the fiercest Opposition; and in choosing thee, as well as the rest of my Apostles, I lay the Foundation of my Doctrine and Religion, in fixing upon whom I shall manifest my self to be a wise Master-Builder, and the Success and Continuance, and Prosperity of it, will be so wonderfully great, as will evidence *that none are so sufficient for these Things.*

III. I come to consider, The Manner in which our Saviour expresses the Stability, Duration, and Success of his Church, *That the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

These Words are no less liable to various Interpretations than the former. By the Gates of Hell are commonly understood the Power, Artifice, and Malice of the Devil, and of those wicked Men, and perverse Instruments, which that evil Spirit shall make use of, and by various Methods inspire, to oppose and overthrow the Church of Christ.

Some understand by the Gates of Hell, the scandalous Doctrines of those primitive Here-

ticks, who corrupted Christianity, and subverted the Design of it, and changed it into a Doctrine of Licentiousness, and Liberty, to commit all manner of Evil.

Others understand by them, the wicked Lives of the Professors of Christianity, that though they may be a stumbling Block, and Offence to Infidels, yet shall never be able, any more than the open Opposition of its avowed Enemies, to overthrow the Doctrine and Church of Christ. But,

By Hell, or *Hades*, as it is in the Original, is meant, both in the Scriptures and *Jewish* Writers, and ancient Fathers, and yet more ancient *Heathens*, the Place, and the Receptacle of the Dead in general, not that assigned to damned or condemned Spirits in particular, but the Place and State that all disembodied Spirits are in, as contradistinguished from the State of our temporal Life, which ends at our Death; and the State of eternal Life, which is counted from the Resurrection.

The Word *Hades*, which we render Hell, never in the Scriptures of the New Testament, nor in the *Greek* Writers, signifies Hell properly, or the State of the damned, but always Death or the Grave, or the State of separate Spirits after Death; all which are Significations of great Affinity one with another.

Throughout all Antiquity, and by all Writers, both Sacred and Profane, the Dead are represented as all promiscuously departing into *Hades*, which is described and set forth as a great House, and one common Receptacle, which is to be the Mansion Place, both of Good and Bad, till the Day of Resurrection
and

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and Time of Account comes, when they shall each be assigned to their respective *eternal* Places of Happiness or Misery : So that nothing is more frequent in the *Greek* Poets, and even among the Sacred Prophets of the *Jews*, than the Mention of the House of *Hades*, and Representations of the Dead, all in common, going to the House of *Hades*, meaning the State of Spirits separate from their Bodies ; this Place of Separation is further described with Doors and Gates, and Death is in their Language, represented as the Door or Gate, or Entrance into *Hades*, and to die or descend into the Grave, is to go down to the Door, or enter into the Gates of *Hades* or Hell.

Thus we find *Job* crying out under a Sense of his Mortality, *Hades is my House*. Thus we find *Hezekiah* complaining, *Isa. xxxviii. 10, 11. I said in the cutting off of my Days, I shall go to the Gates of Hades : I shall be no longer in the Land of the Living*. Thus is our Saviour said to descend into *Hell* ; and the Psalmist prophesies that God would not leave his Soul in *Hell* : Not that he descended into the peculiar Place and State of the Damned, but into the House of *Hades*, the general and common Receptacle of the Dead. And thus is Christ's Power over our Life, and Ability to raise us to Life again after Death, described by his having the Keys of Death and *Hades*, opening, and no Man shutteth, shutting, and no Man openeth *.

So

* I suppose, that the Souls of Men, when separated from their Bodies, are immediately disposed of into a State and Place of Happiness or Misery, suitably to their several respective

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So that the Meaning of Christ's Words is, Thou art a Rock, *and upon this Rock will I build my Church*, and Death it self *shall not prevail against it*; which probably signifies these three Things.

1st. *Thou art Peter, and upon thee, as a Rock, will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hades, or Hell, even Death it self, shall not prevail against it*, i. e. You shall be so fortified with Courage and Resolution, that no Persecution of *Jews* or *Heathens*, no Prospect of Death they can set before you, shall be able to prevent your spreading my Doctrine, and settling the Foundation of my Church in the World.

So many different Kinds of studied Cruelty, and all that Variety of Torture which awaits you, shall never prevent you from preaching my Doctrine, confessing my Name, and gathering me a numerous Church in the World: Though they bring you before Kings and Go-

spective Characters; though that State and Place is not the same, nor their Degree of Happiness or Misery the same as it will be after the general Resurrection. The *Greeks*, under one general comprehensive Word, include the State both of the Good and Bad. The *Heathens* understood it in Contradistinction from the present Life; and the *Christians*, in Contradistinction both from their present, preceding, and their subsequent eternal Life, and both called it *Hades*, or Hell. And our Saviour seems plainly to make the Place of departed Spirits, after Death, different from their Place after the Resurrection, and the Place of good Spirits distinct from that of the bad; when he says to the Thief on the Cross, *This Day thou shalt be with me in Paradise*: For he himself ascended not into Heaven till after his Resurrection, and in the intermediate Time between his Death, and That, his Soul was in *Hades* or Hell, and in that particular Part of it which he here calls *Paradise*, and which, I suppose, to be the Abode of the Saints till the Day of Judgment.

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vernors, threaten you in their Palaces, beat you in their Synagogues, and bring you down to the very Gates of *Hades*, even to Death it self, your Life shall you not count dear, nor your Death dreadful, but voluntarily encountring the Rage of your Enemies, and chearfully submitting to the very Pains of Death, you shall, with irresistibile Success, propagate my Doctrine, and build and establish my Religion among Men.

Though they set you before the Gates of Hell, you see its Doors ready to open upon you, and behold your selves upon the point of entring, not for the sake of Life shall you deny me, but in the very Hour, in the very Agonies of Death, persist with Constancy in the same Confession thou hast now made of my being the Messiah, the Son of the most high God: Such a Rock of Constancy shalt thou prove, that no Threatnings or Punishments, no Swords or Flames, no Instruments of Cruelty, or Ministers of Death, shall make thee deny me before Men, but even under the proud Tyrant's Threats, or in the Tormentor's Hands, thou shalt steadily maintain the Truth of my Doctrine, and the Interest of my Church. *Thou art Peter, and not without Reason have I thus named thee, for upon this Rock will I build my Church.*

2dly. *The Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it, i. e.* Though the Malice of your Enemies shall cut short your Days, and send you to a cruel and untimely End, yet shall not my Doctrine and Church die with you, but find a Passage down to future Ages, and be transmitted to the End of Time.

You

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You shall serve still as a Foundation, and upon you, as a Rock, *will I build my Church*; which however high it may rise, or however far it may reach, shall rest upon you as its Foundation, and Support: Your cruel Persecutors may deliver you to Death, and send you to the House of *Hades*, but my Church shall grow not only by your Lives, but by your Deaths, and by destroying you they shall advance, instead of destroying my Religion; your Wounds and Stripes, and Pains and Tortures, that lead you down to Death, shall raise the Reputation of your Faithfulness and Sincerity, and thereby strengthen the Interest of my Church in the World.

They that see your Constancy and Courage shall condemn those that crucify and torment you, and when they behold your unshaken Patience in the midst of Torture, and find the Lord, whose Name you call on, inspiring you with Valour, above the Strength of Nature, they will infer the Truth of your Doctrines from the Fierceness of your Flames, and the Power of that Faith, which enables you to surmount them.

Death which destroys all other Causes, and prevails against every Thing beside, shall never efface the Memory, destroy the Worship, or prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ, which shall survive all its cruel Persecutors, and see them perish that have attempted to subvert it. *Thou art Peter*, and that Church which I build upon your Preaching, which I found upon your Testimony, and propagate by your Miracles, it will stand a Thousand bitter Persecutions; Bonds and Imprisonments, Scorn and Disgrace, Cruelty

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Cruelty and Malice, will, in their several Ways, and in their several Turns, make Attempts against it ; but all their Efforts will prove feeble and vain, and Death added to all these, shall never work its Overthrow.

Though its Enemies may pursue it in a wild and furious, and its Friends defend it in a lukewarm Manner, it shall stand and continue throughout all Generations, and last till the World falls into Ruins.

3dly. Thou art Peter, and on this Rock will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it, i. e. Though you, my Apostles, and all the Members of my Church, built on you as its Foundation, shall all, one following another in your Turns, enter into these Gates of Hades, and go down to the House appointed for all Flesh : Yet shall not the Gates of Hell be able to prevail against you, and hinder you from rising at the latter Day. I am the Resurrection and the Life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.

Though believing in me will not keep Men from dying naturally, and in that, following the Law of their Nature, which is mortal and frail ; yet the Members of my Church shall all of them be raised at the last Day, when Death, that makes all Men obedient to its Voice, shall it self obey the Summons I will send it, to surrender and give up all that have inhabited that House of Horror. *I have the Keys of Death and Hades ; I will open and no one shall shut.*

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So far will Death or *the Gates of Hell* be from thus prevailing against the *Church of Christ*, that then shall Christ and his *Church* be glorified in its everlasting Overthrow. The Dignity and Authority, and Power of his Character, will be remarkably display'd in the raised, spiritualized, and glorious Bodies of his Saints and Servants, that shall then be redeemed from the *Bondage of Corruption*, and shine like Stars in the Kingdom of his Father, for ever and ever.

Then shall *Peter*, and all his Apostles, by whose Faith and Constancy, by whose Sufferings and Death his Church has been raised, be fully recompensed by a glorious Resurrection from an ignominious Death, by a joyful Rising from a painful one, and shine in eternal Honour and Glory; when persecuting Kings and Princes, and all the Instruments of their Cruelty, shall rise to eternal Shame and Confusion.

Then shall all such as have confessed Christ's Name, and have not hid the Truth through Fear of Men, and whose Virtue and Integrity has cost them their Lives, be call'd from that doleful House of Death and Darkness, when Christ, who has the Keys of them, will open the Gates, and give them an Entrance into a new, a nobler, and a never ending Life.

Thus shall the whole *Church* shine glorious and triumphant, like Christ its Head; and then shall Death it self be cast into the Lake of Fire that burneth for ever.

4thly. I come to explain the Promise made to *Peter*, that he should have the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*; and whatsoever he bound on Earth should be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever

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soever he loosed on Earth, should be loosed in Heaven.

As our Saviour had before declared that his *Church* should be built upon the Foundation of *Peter's* Testimony : So here, speaking concerning the State of the Gospel, called *the Kingdom of Heaven*, he agreeably hereunto promises him that he should have the Opening of it, that he should be employ'd to state the Case between God and Sinners, and represent the Nature of it, remove the Hindrances that lay in their Way, and open a plain and a clear Passage into a State of Grace and Favour with God, that by his Doctrine and Instruction, which, in a metaphorical Stile, are here called the *Keys of the Kingdom*, he should be the happy Instrument of opening it, and introducing Men into it.

By the giving him the *Keys of the Kingdom*, therefore is most natural to understand that the whole Method of Grace and Redemption, and the intire System of Salvation, should be first fully committed unto him, and the other Apostles, and by their Means and Ministry be spread all the World over, and that by the compleat Knowledge they should have of it convey'd into their Minds, they should have the Power of opening that Kingdom which he was about to establish under his own sovereign Jurisdiction and Authority.

The Meaning of our Saviour may be therefore thus understood, Unto you I will commit, as a precious *Depositum*, the Sum of my Doctrine and Gospel, and the whole System of revealed Religion, I lodge the intire Scheme and Method of my Redemption of the World with

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you, *Peter*, and the rest of my Apostles, all the divine Purposes of Grace and Love hid from past Ages, and to be made known to the Ages to come, all the Doctrines of Faith, and the Duties of Life, that are necessary to the Recovery of Men, from their State of Apostacy, to a State of Favour with God, you shall, by me, while I am with you, and by the Holy Ghost when I have left you, be fully instructed in, they shall be laid open to your Apprehensions, and your Understanding shall be filled with the most clear and compleat Knowledge of them : Such Wisdom shall you possess, such divine Instruction shall you receive, as shall effectually *lead you into all Truth*, and such Skill in all divine Things shall be communicated to you, as shall enable you to open to the guilty World, the Way of eternal Life and Salvation.

The whole Method of Redemption and Salvation, wrought for Men by Jesus Christ, being then first and fully committed to the Apostles by their Ministry and Dispensation, to be spread all the World over : They are fitly represented by our Saviour in this Place, as having *the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, the Use of which consisted in the *Opening the Kingdom*, which they did, by communicating this Wisdom and Knowledge in the constant Course of their Life and Ministry ; This Mystery of Redemption, this Stock of sacred and divine Truth, this divine Knowledge of *him*, and his Will, and all Things relating to his Worship and Service, lodged with the Apostles, and by them offered to the Consideration of the World, discovered to them a State of Grace and Favour
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with Almighty God, quite different from the State of Guilt and Enmity they were in with him before, which very justly answers to the metaphorical Stile of *opening the Kingdom of Heaven*, as a State of Grace and Mercy for them.

To *Peter*, and the rest of the Apostles, did our Saviour commit these *Keys*, and this peculiar Use and Exercise of them, who by their first Preaching, and early Addresses to Mankind, did open for them an Entrance into the *Kingdom of Heaven*, and gave them Admission into the Gospel State: And agreeably to this Metaphor we read of Men, when they were converted, having a Door opened to them, *Acts* xiv. 27. *And when they were come, and had gathered the Church together, Paul and Barnabas rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a Door of Faith unto the Gentiles, i. e. had, by their Application of the Keys of the Kingdom, open'd to the Gentiles a Passage for their Entrance into the State of the Gospel.*

And all this was particularly true of *St. Peter*, in that he first open'd *the Kingdom* both to the *Jewish* and *Gentile* World. This Promise was punctually fulfilled by our Lord's making Use of *St. Peter's* Ministry in laying the Foundation of a Christian Church both among *Jews* and *Gentiles*: In his being the first Preacher of the Faith which he had before confessed, and making the first Profelytes to it. Suitably to this Promise, we find that he laid the first Foundation of a Church among the *Jews*, by the Conversion of three Thousand Souls at once, *Acts* ii. 41. *Who when they gladly had embraced St. Peter's Doctrine, were all baptized; and then we*
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have the first mention of a Christian Church actually in being, *ver. 47. And the Lord added daily unto the Church such as should be saved.* And the same Apostle made the first Profelytes from among the *Gentiles*, by the Conversion of *Cornelius* and his Friends; to qualify him for which the Lord convinces him of the Lawfulness of preaching the glad Tidings of Salvation to the *Heathens*, and of conversing with them for that end; and this *Peter* himself takes Notice of, *Acts xv. 7.* and tells the rest of the Apostles, *Men and Brethren, You know how that a good while ago, God chose me out among you, that by my Mouth the Gentiles should hear the Word.*

V. I come now, in the last Place, to explain the Meaning of those Words, *And whatever thou shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.*

St. John, ch. xx. 23. informs us of another Expression made use of by our Saviour: *Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retained.* This, indeed, seems to be an extraordinary Power communicated to the Apostles, and herein our Saviour seems to dignifie and adorn them with a most wonderful Privilege, That whosoever Sins they refused to forgive, should remain upon them, and that whomsoever they pleased they might favour with Forgiveness. But it seems most rational to suppose, that our Saviour does not here invest them with an authoritative but only a declarative Power, not upon their own Authority, and according to Pleasure, and their hu-
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mane Inclination only, to remit and retain the Sins of Men.

But whosesoever Sins ye retain, they are retained, i. e. I endue you with full Power to declare what Sins, when committed, do retain Men in their guilty and unreconciled State with God, and upon what Sort of Sinners the Wrath of God abideth, notwithstanding the Offers of his Mercy in the Gospel; I empower and authorize you, to declare in my Name, who they are that continue under Condemnation, and are not yet come from under the Power and the Curse of Sin, nor entred into my Kingdom, although you have used the Keys, and opened it unto them. Men may wholly depend upon your Declarations, nor can they justly hope for any more Mercy than your Doctrine imports, for what you bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven. God will himself act according to your Denunciations, and, howsoever contemptuously obstinate, and resolved, Sinners may look upon you; and your Threatnings against them, yet they shall find, that what you say God will make good, that he will bless none whom you curse, nor forgive any inconsistently with the Hopes and Rules of Mercy, that you have declared unto them; whosoever you declare shall not receive the Forgiveness of their Sins, inherit God's Favour and Love, the Promises of his Gospel, and the Joys of his Kingdom, all such may as infallibly depend upon the Certainty and Truth of these Declarations, as if they had heard God pronounce them himself; for whatsoever Qualifications you require and lay down as necessary to Justification, and Reconciliation with God, none shall obtain them without; and what-

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whatever Curses you denounce, by Virtue of that Authority I commit unto you, will be executed with the utmost Justness and Exactness.

And whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted, i. e. whatsoever Promises of Pardon and Forgiveness you make, Men may look upon as most certain and infallible, whatever Hopes you encourage in them, whatever Assurances you give them, and upon whatever Conditions you declare them to be reconciled to God, and God to them, they may look upon as so many Oracles spoken by the Mouth of God himself, and rest satisfied and assured, that your Instruction and Teaching upon these Heads, can lead them into no Mistakes or Errors. What Declarations you make of the Love of God, and the Joys of Heaven, and the necessary Duties of a Christian Life, those shall be ratified and confirm'd in Heaven. Whenever you pronounce Comfort and Joy to humble and sincere Penitents, they may take what you say as the surest Grounds to build their Hopes and Peace upon, without the least Surmise or Mistrust of their being mistaken or misled. I do not send you upon an uncertain Errand, to pronounce Things dubious, and subject to Debate, and probable only, but to speak the Counsels, the Decrees, the Oracles of God, and let all Men know, that as sure as you speak, God will do what you speak, and make good all your Words.

Let Sinners, at their Peril, expect Salvation upon any other Terms than you pronounce, let ungodly Men promise themselves to find a better Treatment than you give room to expect, let Adulterers and Drunkards, and all Liars, assure themselves of an Entrance into God's
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heavenly Kingdom, it shall be all fruitless and vain, and their Hopes shall prove as the Spider's Web. All your Sentences shall stand fast as the Oracles of the Almighty, and these shall be the Rule by which he will judge all Men at the last Day.

This is the principal Part of that Power and Authority here promised to St. *Peter*, and to be understood by *binding* and *loosing*, though the Power the Apostles had, of inflicting and healing Diseases, is, very probably, included in this Promise; since those Diseases being considered as the Effects of Mens Sins, the inflicting and removing the former may properly enough be said to be retaining or remitting the latter.

In this Sense our Saviour is to be understood, when having healed the Sick he usually spoke to them after this Manner, *Thy Sins are forgiven thee*, Mat. ix. 6. This Phrase seems incapable of any other Sense, and in *Luke* xiii. 16. the word *Loose* is thus applied by our Saviour, *Mark* ii. 10, 11.

Thus I have given you the Sense of these remarkable Words of our blessed Saviour, the Meaning of which I shall briefly sum up, and put together.

Thou art *Peter*, and as thy Name, by Interpretation, means a *Rock*, so thou shalt indeed be with respect to my Church, what thy Name signifies, for upon thee, as its Foundation, will I erect my *Church*, a *spiritual Building*, unto God; and as a wise Man builds not upon a weak Foundation, so by thy Constancy and Firmness, and Fitness for the Task, thou shalt show the Prudence and Wisdom of my Choice of thee, for so firm and immoveable a Foundation shalt thou

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prove, that the very Powers of Death, *those Gates of Hell, shall not be able to prevail against it* ; all the Terrors of Persecution, and the Tortures of Death, shall be unable to terrify thee from thy steady Purpose and Practice of *building my Church*, nor shall the Power of Death, though it may destroy thee, and this whole Generation, be able to prevent my Doctrine from descending to the next, and even all succeeding Ages of Time ; neither when all the Generations of this World shall have submitted to its Power, shall it be able to detain my Followers in its doleful Habitation, but shall open its Gates, and surrender them up at the Sound of the awful Trump of God.

And to thee do I commit the Power and Province to open my *Kingdom*, and the State of my *Gospel*, by thy Doctrine and Instruction, to both the *Jewish* and the *Gentile* World ; thou shalt first open it, and introduce the People of God, and thine own Nation, and afterwards shalt thou exercise the Power of the *Keys*, and open the *Kingdom* unto the *Gentiles* also. And the Doctrine, which by virtue of my Commission, and by the Aid of my Spirit, thou shalt publish unto all the World, in declaring who are free from Condemnation, and who subject to it ; in pronouncing what Sins will destroy, and what Methods will save Men ; these Things shall be confirmed in Heaven which are transacted on Earth, and the Lord Almighty will make your Decree stand fast. For know ye, *That he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* And likewise, *He that beareth you, beareth me ; and he that beareth me, beareth him that sent me.* And the extraordinary Power
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you shall have of inflicting and healing Diseases, shall be one great Confirmation of the Truth of your Mission to the World.

This Sense and Interpretation seems best to suit with the Words themselves; with the Nature of the Gospel, with the Design and Office of our Saviour, with the Character and Employment of the Apostles, and particularly, with the Character of *Peter* himself, to whom they were immediately spoke, and the Meaning of the Words after this manner, flows naturally and easily out of them, without any force or constraint put upon them.

It remains now that I make some Reflections on the whole.

I. We may observe, That though this Discourse be directed to the Apostle *Peter* alone, yet it is not done in Opposition to, or in Exclusion of the rest of the Apostles; for the Christian Religion is not founded more on *Peter* than on the rest of the Twelve; his Testimony makes no stronger an Article in the Proof of Christianity, than that of any other of the Apostles, who were all equally Witnesses of Christ's Resurrection, and upon whose Testimony equal stress is to be laid. Hence in other Places, the Apostles, all of them, and not *Peter* in particular, are said to be the Foundation of Christianity, *Eph. ii. 20. Ye are fellow Citizens of the Saints, and of the Household of God, being built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner Stone.* Had it been said, *Peter* himself being the chief corner Stone, the Papists might have triumph'd with some shew of Justice, but here all of them are

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put upon an equal foot, as to their being the Foundation of the Christian Religion.

In the Book of the *Revelations*, ch. xxi. 14. the Apostles are again represented in a perfect Equality one with another, for there the City of the *New Jerusalem* being at large described, it is said, *The Wall of it hath twelve Foundations, and in them the Names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb*, wherein there is not any Preference given to *Peter* above the rest, as to his being the Foundation of Christianity, nor any Thing to destroy that Equality there is between them all; from both which Places we may infer, That there is no danger at all in making the *Rock* in the Text relate to *Peter*, since all the Apostles are represented as the Foundation on which the Christian Religion is built.

This is further evident, in that both the Encomiums and Privileges, mentioned in the Text, do, in Fact, as much belong to, and were, in Reality, as much possessed by the Apostles in common, as *Peter* in particular: These are their having Christianity built on their Preaching, and their having *the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*. Now the rest of the Apostles did found Churches, and make Profelytes, and spread Christ's Doctrine, in many Cities and Kingdoms, and Countries, where *Peter* never came; and many Churches were raised, of Believers in Christ, who never heard that Apostle speak in their Assemblies, nor teach in their Streets. In those Places *Peter* could not be the Foundation of Christianity, any otherwise than his concurring Testimony constituted part of the Proof of it; but these were built, in the same Sense, on the other Apostles, as those Churches which *Peter* converted,

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ted, might be said to be built and founded on him. And as to the *Binding* and *Loosing* mentioned in the Text, this must have equally belong'd unto them, because we read, *John* xx. 21. *Then said Jesus unto the Apostles, As my Father hath sent me, so send I you; and when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; and whosesoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosesoever Sins ye retain, they are retained;* which is in other Words the same Thing that he said to *Peter*.

2. We may observe, that as the principal Things here said of *Peter*, do not exclude the rest of the Apostles, so neither do they include his pretended Successors in the Church of *Rome*, any further than they may be applied to all Christians.

For Christ's building his Church upon that Foundation, refers principally to the first Age of Christianity, and to the Persons of the Apostles; for then the Foundation was laid, and in the succeeding Times his Church is represented as built up upon that Foundation of the Apostles; and then, just after the Resurrection it was, that the Kingdom was opened by the Keys of the Christian Doctrine and Truth committed to the Apostles.

It is true, the pretended Successors of *Peter* may, in a lower, though a proper Sense, be said to be the Foundation of Christianity, and to have the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, if they will travel into the dark Countries where *Heathenism* and the old *Gentile* Religion reigns, and there spread and diffuse the Truths of Christianity; but it is too notorious, that whenever they travel under such an outward Pretence,

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they are a Foundation of that which is subversive of the Foundation, on which Christ's Church is built, and open a Kingdom, which has none of the Characters of Christ's Kingdom belonging to it, no Truth or Virtue, no Light or Knowledge, no Freedom or Liberty, but is the old Kingdom of Darkness and Delusion revived and set up, under another Form, wherein the Slavery of the People, and the Dominion of the Priests, are the only Things aimed at.

3. Hence we may infer, that *the Keys of the Kingdom*, and the Power of binding and loosing, can be no otherwise claimed by the Bishop of *Rome*, than by every private Christian, since the original and emphatical Use of these Keys, and Exercise of this Power, was appropriated to the Times and Persons of the Apostles; and that in a lower Sense, every one that lets another into the Knowledge of Christ and his Gospel, who was wholly ignorant of them before, may be said to have the Keys, and open *the Kingdom of Heaven* to him, and in declaring the Tenor of the Covenant of Grace to him, to remit or retain his Sins.

4. We may observe, that the particular Instance of St. *Peter's* Weakness in denying Christ, is no Argument against this Constancy and Firmness of his Character in general, any more than the Anger of *Moses*, or the Impatience of *Job*, or the Impiety of *David*, is a Reason for denying them the Characters of Meekness and Patience, and Piety, which are so generally and justly allowed them: The Characters of Men are to be taken from the general Course and Conduct of their Lives, and not from any single

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gle and particular Action, wherein they deviate from their accustomed Behaviour: It is as just therefore, to ascribe to *Peter* this Character of Constancy, in the Faith and Profession of Christianity, notwithstanding this Instance of his denying Christ, as that of Meekness to *Moses*, or Patience to *Job*, or Piety to *David*, to which their Conduct affords Exceptions, equally notorious.

It was owing to the too great Confidence *St. Peter* had in the Firmness and Fortitude of his Mind, that he became guilty of this Denial of Christ; and it might be necessary to shew him, by some such Instance as this, the Weakness of humane Resolution and Constancy, when Men are left destitute of the divine Aid; and therefore, when Satan, stirred up by the boasted Courage, and unshaken Constancy of *Peter*, and the rest, petitioned our Saviour for leave to sift his Apostles, and thereby make Trial of it, (as he did God before, to make Proof of the Innocence of his Servant *Job*) he complied with his Desire, and in these remarkable Words, informs *St. Peter* of it, *Luke xxii. 31, 32. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you (ῥηῶς) that he may sift you as Wheat, but I have prayed for thee (καὶ σὺ) that thy Faith fail not; and when thou art converted strengthen thy Brethren.*

5. We may hence infer the Pride and Blasphemy of that Sense, in which the Papists pretend to the Right of *binding and loosing, of retaining and remitting Sins*; which is, that they can pardon Sins to those of their own Communion, where there is no Repentance, and retain us, who are Hereticks, under ours, though we have the

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the most sincere one; that they can loose the Conscience from all the Ties of Nature, Affinity and Blood, and allow a Liberty to the blackest Villanies Men can commit; and, in short, change the Nature of Virtue and Vice, of Good and Evil, a Power the Almighty has not, and whereby they set themselves above God in the World. This Day brings to our Mind how often they have sought Opportunities to reduce these their vile and detestable Principles into Practice, in their Conduct toward us of these Nations: How often they have attempted to enslave both our Bodies and our Minds, to destroy both our sacred and our civil Rights, and bring us under a Spiritual, which is the worst of Tyranny; let every Remembrance of their Principles and Practices, create in us an utter and intire Aversion to the Popish Religion, which nothing but Blindness and Ignorance can lead Men into, and nothing but Blindness and Ignorance can be a sufficient Excuse for, with Almighty God.

F I N I S.

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